U.S. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

Reference Division

A GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION OF EXHIBITS

March 12, 1957

The purpose of this guide is twofold: (1) to assist the exhibitor with the planning and organization of his display, and (2) to attempt to provide a systematic approach to effective exhibit preparation. The following procedure is based on a similar plan which proved helpful in the preparation of a special library exhibit.

STAGE I - SELECTION OF SUBJECT

(1) Purpose: WHY is it chosen? (For commemorative reasons? professional application, personal interest?)

(2) Emphasis: FOR WHOM is the exhibit to be prepared? Medical or other special groups? library staff? layity, etc.? WHAT is the approach? - historical? factual? biographical? selective?

(3) Scope: HOW much space can exhibit occupy? - (9 cases or 1 case) HOW LONG will exhibit be on display? How long does exhibitor have to prepare it? HOW portable will exhibit be? Could it be loaned? Could it be shipped?

STAGE II - RESEARCH

This section deals with the organization of all material to be displayed. To save time and confusion, it is recommended that at this collecting stage, an accurate record be made of all material selected which is available in the Library for display. This record could be arranged by the categories suggested below. On each list, there should be a description of the item together with its specifications for estimating its spatial requirements in the cases. At this stage, in order that as much advance notice as possible may be given, it is advisable to make the preliminary arrangements for loans and photocopying of materials to be used. In case of delays, it is a good plan to select suitable substitutes. Prepare (in duplicate) with your name, the title of the exhibit and date of display, lists of the following:

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(a) Books selected from the Library collection.

(b) Books selected to be requested on Interlibrary Loan.

(c) Picture material.

(Submit one copy of the lists for items (a) and (b) to the Head, Circulation Section. Submit one copy of the list for items (c) to the Head, Art Section. Retain an extra copy of each list for your own record).

Photoduplication

All orders for photoduplication should be submitted to the Head, Photographic Services Section, according to usual Library procedures. Other items should be requested from the respective institutions having available material.

Items for display usually include:

(1) Bibliographic: Includes all printed materials which are available, such as biographies, histories, journal articles, newspapers, maps, facsimile and original letters, etc.

(2) Pictorial: Includes photographs, etchings, paintings, drawings, caricatures, cartoons, etc.

(3) Artifacts: May include drugs and pharmaceuticals, ceramics, instruments, busts, plaques, furniture, equipment, etc., to be used for accent only.

STAGE III - DEVELOPMENT

(1) Color scheme (a) basic color; (b) complimentary color or colors which you wish to use should be decided at this stage.

(2) Materials: What quality of textural materials are to be used for (a) the background of the cases, (b) for relief purposes? Materials (a) could be satin, velvet, burlap, [illegible]rkcloth; (b) ribbon, yarn, twine, masking tape, etc.

(3) Title-card: Select color and size of board and lettering. Construct.

(4) Preface: If a "preface" is to be used, this is the time to plan it. It should be chiefly a "come-on", - a device which will "high-light" as briefly and simply as possible the whole display. If a case is planned for the entrance hall, then this could feasibly serve as the preface, using the title-card, and one item or more, e.g. a book and a box of instruments, or, a plaque and a biography, etc. Suggestion: Use imagination; keep it subtle.

(5) Introduction: This should be prepared carefully; it should be brief and concise, and should reflect as succinctly as possible the essence of the exhibit, so that at a glance the viewer will know the main features of the whole exhibit. Long passages of description do not get read and often deter the viewer from the rest of the exhibit. Suggested forms of introduction include: an historical sketch, a chronology of events, a quotation, etc. After it is prepared, it should be submitted immediately to Chief, Reference Division for editing and clearance.

(6) Copy for Library Bulletin and News: This is a good time to prepare copy for publication, since at this stage, enough time is allowed for correction or revision.

(7) Leaflet: If a leaflet or "give-away" is planned, this also should be prepared, submitted for approval before printing, and an order prepared for the required number (100-150). Retain stencil or plate in case more copies are needed.

STAGE IV - LAY-OUT

(1) Using brown wrapping paper, cut sections to measure exactly the dimensions of the exhibit cases (using 1" to 1' scale).

(2) Decide location of Introduction and mark its position on the lay-out. (Normally people read from left to right, although sequence of cases in exhibit room may be entirely arbitrary, depending on the type of exhibit).

(3) Taking the lists of items to be used with their specifications, draft the contents of each case on the brown paper sections. (It may be necessary to arrange actual material on the lay-out sheet, in case of color conflicts, etc.) At this point, it is a helpful reminder to add that one

need not feel compelled to fill the entire case, and that one book exhibited alone may often be more effective than if it were crammed with a half-dozen items. Items for display, like people, need room to "breathe"; like people, they also need a setting or "environment" to show them off. As in the theater, the setting (or exhibit case) can make or mar the whole production. Try, also, to have each case tell a story - as a unit, which, although it interlocks with the others, is, nevertheless, independent. After the items are drawn to scale on the layout sheet, they should be individually identified, to facilitate final assembly. Include the "Preface" case, if required.

(4) Prepare labels,* making sure that the information is clear and concise for the typist who prepares them. It is a good plan to have them edited as a final test of accuracy, and also for clarity for the viewer who reads them.

(5) Mounting: All pictorial material must be mounted. This point is important, for photostats, pictures, and other paper material will curl drastically under the heat of display lights in hermetically sealed cases. Mount labels. Press all mounted material under suitable weights until time of assembly in cases.

(6) Draw on lay-out where the labels will be placed. Affix case number to each sheet.

STAGE V - ASSEMBLY

(1) Assemble all material on book-truck so that it is together in one place when exhibit is ready to be placed in cases. To facilitate assembly, attach a slip to each piece with its location (e.g. Case 2, No. 4) according to the lay-out.

(2) Consult with previous exhibitor with regard to the exact closing date, and arrange a convenient time so that the transition will be as smooth as possible.

* Remember credit lines for material borrowed from other libraries and institutions.

(3) Obtain keys for opening cases from Art Section. Prepare floor-boards of cases by covering with background material already selected. For ease of operation, these floor-boards are removable.

(4) Working with lay-out, construct each case.

(5) Check lighting so that all cases will be lighted, throughout period of display.

(6) Before closing cases, obtain final approval from Chief, Reference Division.

(7) Lock cases securely. Return keys to Art Section.

STAGE VI - PUBLICITY

(1) Prepare Library hall-sign with title of exhibit. A box of letters for this sign is maintained in the Office of the Chief, Administrative Division.

(2) Prepare visitors' book, adding space for comments, if necessary.

(3) Set out for distribution the leaflets prepared for the exhibit. You may also wish to mail a copy of the leaflet to any institutions lending material for the exhibit.

(4) Using the lists of items, prepare a consolidated list of contents; preferably case by case, for a permanent record.

(5) Prepare folder for your own personal record, adding copies of lists, the consolidated contents list, etc. and any notes regarding difficulties met with during preparation, suggestions for the future, comments received.

STAGE VII - DISMANTLING

(1) With book-truck at hand, remove all material from cases. Using lists prepared as guide, place material in groups according to their final destination.

(2) Return all books to Head, Circulation Section.

(3) Return picture material with labels and title-card to Head, Art Section.

(4) Return other items to the respective institutions.

(5) Remove back-ground material from case floor-boards. Return to Head, Art Section.

(6) Return all letters from Library hall-sign to Office of the Chief, Administrative Division.

(7) Lock cases securely and return keys to Art Section.

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EXHIBIT EQUIPMENT AND MATERIAL AVAILABLE IN ART SECTION

Exhibit Cases

2 upright wall cases (53" tall, 36" wide, 14" deep)
1 vertical double door wall case (89" tall x 48"; upper area 48" x 48" x 8"; lower area 48" x 18" x 8")
4 flat top table exhibit cases (54" long, 24" wide, 5" deep)
2 slant top cases (69" long, 44" wide, 5" deep)
1 small slant top case (13 1/2" tall, 10" wide, 10" deep)
1 peg board stand, with metal holders (assorted sizes)
1 plastic holder (for leaflet distribution)

Sign Equipment

1 box plastic letters (1 1/2" and 1")
1 box (each) cardboard letters (2"; 3/4")
1 box (each) tile letters (3/4"; 1"; and 1 1/2")
6 sign boards
supply construction board (assorted colors)
supply construction papers (assorted colors)

Miscellaneous

Plastic strips (assorted sizes)
Slit blocks (assorted sizes) to hold labels
Supply red ribbon, 2 yeards
Thumb tacks
2 yards dark red monkscloth